

410 RIDE-ALONG

410.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The ride-along program provides an opportunity for persons to experience the law enforcement function firsthand. This policy provides the requirements, approval process and hours of operation for the ride-along program.

410.1.1 ELIGIBILITY

The Columbia Police Department ride-along program is offered to residents, students and those employed within the City. Reasonable efforts should be made to accommodate interested persons. Any applicant may be disqualified without cause from participating in the program.

Factors that may be considered in disqualifying an applicant include, but are not limited to:

- Being under 15 years of age
- Prior criminal history
- Pending criminal action
- Pending lawsuit against the Department
- Denial by any supervisor

410.1.2 AVAILABILITY

The ride-along program is available on most days of the week. The ride-along times are from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Exceptions to this schedule may be made as approved by the Chief of Police, Bureau Commander or Watch Commander.

410.2 PROCEDURE TO REQUEST A RIDE-ALONG

Generally, ride-along requests will be scheduled by the Watch Commander. The participant will complete and sign a ride-along waiver form. Information requested will include a valid driver's license, address and telephone number. If the participant is under 18 years of age, a parent/guardian must be present to complete the ride-along form.

The Watch Commander will schedule a date, based on availability, at least one week after the date of application. If approved, a copy of the ride-along waiver form will be forwarded to the respective Watch Commander as soon as possible for his/her scheduling considerations.

If the ride-along is denied after the request has been made, a representative of the Department will contact the applicant and advise him/her of the denial.

410.2.1 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Once approved, civilian participants will be allowed to ride no more than once every six months. An exception would apply to the following: cadets, Explorers, qualified volunteers, chaplains, reserves, auxiliary and police applicants with approval of the Watch Commander.

An effort will be made to ensure that no more than one citizen will participate in a ride-along during any given time period. Normally, no more than one participant will be allowed in the officer's vehicle at a given time.

Ride-along requirements for police cadets are covered in the Police Cadets Policy.

410.2.2 SUITABLE ATTIRE

Any person approved to ride-along is required to be suitably dressed in a collared shirt, blouse or jacket, slacks and shoes. Sandals, T-shirts, tank tops, shorts and ripped or torn blue jeans are not permitted. Hats and ball caps will not be worn in the police vehicle. The Watch Commander or field supervisor may refuse a ride-along to anyone not properly dressed.

410.2.3 PEACE OFFICER RIDE-ALONGS

Off-duty members of this department or any other law enforcement agency will not be permitted to ride-along with on-duty officers without the express consent of the Watch Commander. In the event that such a ride-along is permitted, the off-duty employee shall not be considered on-duty and shall not represent him/herself as a peace officer or participate in any law enforcement activity except as emergency circumstances may require.

410.2.4 RIDE-ALONG CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

All ride-along applicants are subject to a criminal history check. The criminal history check may include a local records check and a Missouri Automated Criminal History Site (MACHS) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) criminal history check prior to approval as a ride-along participant (provided that the participant is not an employee of the Columbia Police Department).

410.3 OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The officer shall advise the dispatcher that a ride-along participant is present in the vehicle before going into service. Officers shall consider the safety of the participant at all times.

Officers should use sound discretion when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, such as a high-speed pursuit. If practicable, the participant should be let out of the vehicle in a safe, well-lighted place. The dispatcher will be advised of the situation and as soon as practicable have another police unit respond to pick up the participant at that location. The ride-along may be continued or terminated at this time.

Conduct by a person participating in a ride-along that results in termination of the ride or is otherwise inappropriate should be immediately reported to the Watch Commander.

The Watch Commander is responsible for maintaining and scheduling ride-alongs. Upon completion of the ride-along, a copy of the ride-along waiver form shall be returned to the Watch Commander with any comments that may be offered by the officer.

410.4 CONTROL OF RIDE-ALONG

The officer shall maintain control over the participant at all times and instruct him/her in the conditions that necessarily limit participation. These instructions should include the following:

1. The participant will follow the directions of the officer.
2. The participant will not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects or handling any police equipment.
3. The participant may terminate the ride at any time and the officer may return the observer to his/her home, the place of the ride origin or to the station if the participant interferes with the performance of the officer's duties.
4. Ride-along participants may be allowed to continue riding during the transportation and booking process, provided this does not jeopardize their safety.
5. Officers will not allow any participant to be present in any residence or situation that would jeopardize his/her safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other person.
6. Under no circumstance shall a civilian participant be permitted to enter a private residence with an officer without the express consent of the resident or other authorized person.